

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director/Support

SUBJECT : History of the CIA Cornerstone Box

Following the symbolic placing of the Cornerstone Box at the laying of the CIA Cornerstone by the President of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower, on 3 November 1959, the box was removed from its niche and taken into custody until such time as the Cornerstone was permanently emplaced. At that time, the Cornerstone Box contained only that material which was listed in the program of the Ceremony, minus the microfilm of the newspapers of 3 November, the tape recording of the Cornerstone Ceremony, and the photographs of that occasion.

2. Despite the Director's joking remark to the President (recorded on the tape) that the contents of the Box were "secret", there were no classified documents in the Cornerstone Box. Prior to the ceremony, careful consideration had been given to the documents which were to be included in the Box. After consultation with the Deputy Directors and the Inspector General, Mr. Walter Pforzheimer, the Curator of the CIA Historical Intelligence Collection, had drawn up a list of proposed materials for inclusion in the Box, subject to the approval of Mr. Dulles. Included on the list were a considerable number of classified documents, largely in the field of National Estimates. It was finally determined not to include any classified material in the Cornerstone Box at the time of the Ceremony, and that the whole subject of classified contents should be held in abeyance until it could be determined what degree of control the Security Office would have over the new building when the box was finally put into the Cornerstone. Late in September 1960, the contractors advised that they were virtually at the point when they would desire to lay the Cornerstone permanently. At that time, the contents of the Cornerstone Box were reconsidered, and the DDC made a final determination that it should contain no classified material. At the request of the Office of the DDC, there was added to the contents of the Box those medals which are awarded for distinguished service in the field of intelligence, namely: the National Security Medal, the Distinguished Intelligence Cross, the Distinguished Intelligence Medal, the Intelligence Star, and the Intelligence Medal of Merit; together with a description of these medals and the certificates which accompany them when awarded; and also a copy of the Certificate of Merit with Distinction and the Certificate of Merit. The complete list of the contents of the Cornerstone Box is appended as Tab A.

3. At this time, reconsideration was also given to the proper preservation of the contents of the Cornerstone Box and its ultimate sealing. There had been a general feeling that the copper box, furnished by the architects, was not of the desired standard. It was rather too small for the contents, and its copper was not sufficiently thick to withstand the necessary welding of the top without seriously warping the papers enclosed. On the other hand, it had to be of the correct size to fit into the niche provided for it behind the Cornerstone. For these reasons, Mr. H. Gates Lloyd, Assistant Deputy Director/Support, made arrangements, through the CIA Technical Service Division,

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with the National Bureau of Standards to prepare a new copper box, whose sides are about an eighth of an inch thick. The box has been constructed from thirty pounds of copper. The magnetic tape recording of the Cornerstone Ceremony and the formal opening of the contractors' bids on the building has been placed in a steel box with a quarter inch steel plate on top and bottom, and a 1/8 inch steel plate on the sides. A description of the Cornerstone Box and its preparation, written by the Bureau of Standards, is attached herewith as Tab B.

4. On 20 October 1960, Mr. Lloyd and Mr. Pforzheimer, accompanied by two members of the Technical Services Division staff, [redacted] 25X1  
[redacted], went to the National Bureau of Standards and placed the material in the Cornerstone Box. The Box cover was then welded into place by Bureau of Standards employees. This process was under the supervision of George A. Ellinger, Chief of the Corrosion Section, Metallurgy Division, National Bureau of Standards, and Melvin Romanoff of his staff. Pictures of the ceremony were taken. The copper box was then buffed by Mr. Zieda, also a Bureau employee. Inscribed on the top of the Box is an instruction which reads as follows:

Top  
To Open:  
Cut Carefully Near Top  
Do Not Use Torch

5. On 2 November, Colonel L. K. White, Deputy Director/Support, accompanied by Mr. Lloyd and Mr. Pforzheimer, inserted the Cornerstone Box into its niche, and the Cornerstone was then lowered into place. Many of the participants, which also included Mr. James A. Garrison, Director of Logistics, Mr. [redacted] 25X1  
[redacted], Chief of the Building Planning Staff, and other members of their staff, as well as representatives of the architects and contractors, threw lucky pennies into the niche with the Box. Photographs were taken.

[redacted] 25X1  
Walter Pforzheimer  
Curator/Historical Intelligence  
Collection

C O N F I D E N T I A L

CONTENTS OF CORNERSTONE BOX

Copy of Memorandum for President Franklin D. Roosevelt from Major General William J. Donovan, Director of the Office of Strategic Services, dated 18 November 1944, regarding the establishment of a permanent centralized intelligence service and copy of Memorandum from President Roosevelt to General Donovan, dated 5 April 1945, directing that General Donovan discuss his plan with the appropriate officials of the Government.

Copy of President Harry S. Truman's Executive Letter of 22 January 1946, establishing the National Intelligence Authority and the Central Intelligence Group.

Statement of General (then Lieutenant General) Hoyt S. Vandenberg, Director of Central Intelligence, before the Senate Committee on Armed Services, on 29 April 1947, in support of the sections of the proposed National Security Act of 1947 to establish the Central Intelligence Agency.

A Text and Explanation of Statutes and Executive Orders relating specifically to the Central Intelligence Agency, including Enabling and Appropriations Acts for the construction of the new CIA Building.

Reproduction of the CIA seal and its official description.

"William J. Donovan and the National Security." A speech by Allen W. Dulles, Director of Central Intelligence, to the Erie County Bar Association, Buffalo, New York, 4 May 1959.

Aerial photographs of the area of the CIA Building site at the time of the Cornerstone Ceremony.

Copy of the architect's drawing of the CIA Building as it will appear when completed.

Invitation to the ceremony, copy of the Program, tape recording of the proceedings, selected photographs of the ceremony, and copy of pamphlet entitled "The Cornerstone Ceremony," containing the speeches made on the occasion.

A microfilm of Washington and northern Virginia and newspapers for 3 November 1959 (the date of the ceremony), and selected articles from subsequent issues (4-6 November) concerning the ceremony.

The National Security Medal and the three CIA Medals, the Distinguished Intelligence Cross, the Distinguished Intelligence Medal, the Intelligence Star, and the Intelligence Medal of Merit; together with a description of these medals and the certificates which accompany them when awarded; and also a copy of the Certificate of Merit with Distinction and the Certificate of Merit.

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Method of Construction of Metal Boxes

Used to Contain These Articles

The steel box which contains the magnetic tape was constructed from AISI number 1020 steel. The plates for the sides, top and bottom of the box and cover were cut to size and all edges ground. The seams in the box and cover were joined by the electric arc weld method.

The outer container was fabricated from copper plates which were joined by Bellare welds (inert gas tungsten arc method).

The container was lined with asbestos paper (dried at 105°C for 18 hours), the contents inserted in the box and the lid was welded in place. During the operation of welding the lid, the container was immersed in water up to one inch from the top in order to reduce the temperature inside the box.

Prior to sealing the copper box, the same operations were performed on a dummy box which contained similar articles. Before opening the box to examine the contents, it was totally immersed in water to check for leakage.

The box was made and sealed at the National Bureau of Standards.